

democrat, I might add—as someone who believes that everybody has a right to live in a free society and everybody wants to live in a free society, the month of January 2005 is an extraordinary month.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Israeli and Palestinian Roles Following Elections

Q. Are there any steps that Israel can take to help the Abbas position, any confidence-building measures? And Abbas called Israel the “Zionist enemy” on the campaign trail. Was that rhetoric helpful?

The President. I think Israel did help with the elections. I know the Secretary worked hard on making it clear to Israel that it was very important that voters in Jerusalem be allowed to have access to the polls. And the initial reports we got back, and on the briefing that the Secretary gave me today about the initial reports on the election, was that there was better than good movement. I mean, it was better than we thought a month ago, that the Israelis did understand the need to have an election.

I think it’s going to be very important for Israel to fulfill its obligation on the withdrawal from the territories that they have pledged to withdraw from. It is essential that Israel keep a vision of two states, living side by side in peace, and that as the Palestinians begin to develop the institutions of a state, that the Israeli Government support the development of those institutions and recognize that it is essential that there be a viable economy, that there be a viable health care system, that people be—that people be allowed to start building a society that meets their hopes and needs. And Israel can play and must play an important part of the development of a Palestinian state.

At the same time, it’s essential that the Palestinian leadership consolidate security forces, so that they can fight off those few who still have the desire to destroy Israel as a part of their philosophy and those few who fear there to be a free vote amongst the Palestinian people.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President-elect Mahmoud Abbas

(Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the United States Agency for International Development

January 10, 2005

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Good morning. A little more than 2 weeks ago, the world witnessed one of the worst displays of natural destruction in history. Since that time, the world has witnessed one of history’s greatest displays of compassion.

Most of you are members of this great organization, the United States Agency for International Development. Some of you are members of nongovernmental organizations. All of you are playing an important role in that compassionate response. The world has taken notice, and the American people are grateful.

Throughout the many affected regions, the loss of life and property is immense. People and nations throughout Asia and around the world are working to ease the suffering brought on by this terrible disaster. The international community has responded with generosity and compassion, and the men and women of USAID have been at the center of that response. And I’m here to thank you.

I want to thank our Secretary of State for his fantastic service to our Nation. I want to thank him for recently leading a delegation to the affected areas to express our Nation’s deepest concerns. I want to thank him for keeping my little brother straight. [Laughter] But the Secretary is—any time he represents America does so with such dignity and strength. And Mr. Secretary, you did so again, and the world better understands our heart as a result of your trip. And I thank you for it.

And I appreciate Andrew’s work. [Applause] Andrew, you should take that as a good sign. [Laughter] Either that, or it’s all your close relatives who are here. [Laughter] But I really do want to thank Andrew for not only helping to organize the effort but

for his travels and his concern and his willingness to put in the long hours necessary to make sure that which we spend works.

And I want to thank you all for working along with Andrew. I know the response disaster team of USAID is sitting behind me. Andrew tells me that the response disaster team went into work the minute we heard about the disaster. And since then, you've been working long hours. I appreciate it very much.

We just finished meeting with a group of representatives and heads of nongovernmental organizations, NGOs, all of which are providing love and compassion and help. After that meeting, I must tell you my spirits were raised even higher than they were walking into the meeting. There is no question in my mind that the NGOs of America provide such vital, vital help in times of disaster.

A little later on, I want to make yet another appeal for people in America to donate money. But I do want to remind our fellow citizens, as you donate money to the tsunami relief effort, make sure you continue to contribute to NGOs, because those groups—we still have problems in other parts of our country and other parts of the world. It is essential that your contribution not replace the ongoing contributions you're making to help the NGOs of America. You should view the tsunami relief effort as extra help, to help solve the problem, so that we don't short-change the compassionate needs—the needs for compassion elsewhere in our country and the world.

Colin and brother Jeb earlier, and Andy came by and reported to me what they have seen. The pictures do not do the devastation justice. They don't tell the whole story of what we've seen on TV, what these people have seen in person. The devastation was on a scale that none of them had ever experienced. I think Colin referred to Banda Aceh as something the equivalent of Hiroshima. They reported that the efforts are well-coordinated. In other words, there's a huge problem, but the good news is, is that the efforts, the compassion, the money, the hope, is well-coordinated and that your work is making a difference in saving lives and helping people who need help. That's what you're here to do, and it's working.

USAID personnel in the region responded the very day the disaster struck. So not only did the response team get set up, but the people around the world began to move. Your fellow colleagues and yourselves have been working day and night, 24 hours a day, and we're grateful. It's not easy. I know; it's hard, particularly in the time of year in which this hit. But you're doing your job, and for that, I'm extremely grateful.

I think the intensity of the effort reflects the enormity of the task. After all, the death toll is estimated at 150,000 people and may climb even higher. Among the dead are thousands of children, and as many as 5 million people are thought to be homeless or without food and clean water. You're coordinating airlifts of relief supplies to the affected areas. You're arranging for clean water. You're arranging for medical aid. You're arranging for psychological help. And that's important work.

USAID has delivered food, temporary shelter, hygiene kits, and supplies to help people survive. In other words, we've been focused on the relief effort. Now we're beginning to focus on rehabilitation and rebuilding. And as a result, USAID is arranging small loans for those whose livelihoods have been destroyed. We were talking about the NGOs who have been working along with USAID. I think Ruth mentioned the fact that her agency has now provided a fishing boat. In other words, we're beginning to help rebuild lives and help people get back on their feet.

The NGOs, including our faith-based organizations, had been working in these regions for decades. As the head of the NGO or the representative of the NGO, spoke—said, "Well, Mr. President, we have been there for 30 or 40 years." And as a result of having been there, there's an infrastructure in place, which is good news for those who need help.

Not only are these people, the NGOs, expressing the world's concern, the cooperation between our Government and the NGOs has been superb. And that's important. It is important because we don't want to have a duplication of effort. We want to make sure that we assess the needs and make sure that our

contributions, whether they be from the public sector or the private sector, are spent wisely. And having listened carefully to Colin and Andrew and the NGO heads, I can say to the American people that to the best extent possible, we're coordinating our efforts.

We're not only coordinating our efforts here at home; we're also doing a better job of coordinating our efforts with other governments and international NGOs. We made an initial commitment of \$350 million for relief efforts. That's a commitment from the Federal Government. And the NGOs, in turn, are using some of those funds effectively to meet the needs of the people on the ground. In other words, what we have done is we've made a commitment at the Federal level, and we said how best to spend that money. And the best way to spend that money is to actually spend it with people who know what they're doing on the ground. We don't need to try to—now is not the time to try to come up with a new way of solving old problems. Now is the way to use people who have been solving problems in an effective way to help people on the ground. And that's exactly what we're doing.

Our military is doing a fantastic job, by the way. I want to thank our commanders on the ground, and I want to thank our troops who are representing the best of America. Navy vessels, including the U.S.S. *Abraham Lincoln*, have moved into the region, and they are providing food and medical supplies and clean water. Helicopters and military aircraft are meeting critical needs by airlifting supplies directly to the victims. After all, many of the victims have lived in remote areas. And so many other places, our servicemen—like in so many other places, those who wear our uniform are showing the great decency of America. And I thank them for that. I can't tell you how much our Government and the people of America appreciate the good work our military is doing to help relieve the suffering from this crisis.

The NGOs with which I met tell me about the incredible outpouring of generosity here at home. And I want to thank all those who have contributed to the NGOs. I particularly want to thank two former Presidents, 41 and 42—[laughter]—or Dad and Bill—[laughter]—for stepping up and helping to raise

money. It's important that Presidents Clinton and Bush do what they have done, and I can't thank them enough for taking time out of their busy schedules to send out an appeal to the citizens of our country.

Listen, people want to help. I repeat, make sure that this help doesn't take the place of other help you're giving, but if you do want to continue to help, and I ask you to do so, please go to usafreedomcorps.gov on the web page, and that's a way to make sure your money—shows you where to send your money and to make sure it's properly used. And as well, hopefully the legislation I sign that will allow taxpayers to deduct this month's contribution for tsunami relief from your 2004 tax returns is further incentive, kind of a little kick to the heart. [Laughter]

The United States Government and the NGOs that have worked so hard for so long in the region are committed to this area of the world for a long time. This is one of these projects that's not going to happen overnight. The intense scrutiny may dissipate and probably will, but our focus has got to stay on this part of the world. We have a duty—we have made a commitment, and our commitment is a long-term commitment to help these good folks in the part of the world that got affected get back on their feet.

Well after the immediate danger passes, USAID is still going to be in the hard-hit areas. And I thank you for that. See, you're going to be helping the people improve their schools and develop health services and mitigate conflict and reinvigorate local economies and help build institutions of democracy so people can live in peace and freedom.

As our Government's leader in relief and reconstruction, USAID and its predecessors have done this kind of work before. You have done big jobs in the past, such as the Marshall plan. And we're committed to not only solving this problem, but we're committed to the work that goes on year-round in nearly a hundred countries, countries that include Iraq and Afghanistan, where you're helping to build—to bring a better future to millions of people who have been newly liberated and to regions in the world like Darfur in the Sudan, where you're helping to reduce deaths and violence in that troubled region.

The efforts of USAID is essential for the foreign policy of the United States of America. Your efforts and the efforts of others, especially to create jobs, promote markets, improve health, fight HIV/AIDS, and help democracy take root, are instrumental to making the world a better place and to protecting the American people.

From Sudan to Sumatra, the world has seen America at its best through the work you do. Sometimes you don't get thanked enough. I don't know how many times a President has been by to say thanks, but I'll tell you this: It's my distinct honor to come by and say thanks. I appreciate your compassion. I appreciate your love for your fellow human being, and thank you for the work you do.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Andrew S. Natsios, Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development.

Remarks on the Nomination of Michael Chertoff To Be Secretary of Homeland Security

January 11, 2005

Good morning. I'm pleased to announce my nomination of Judge Michael Chertoff to be the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Mike is a talented and experienced public servant. In his stellar career, he has been a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit; he's been an Assistant Attorney General of the United States; he's been the U.S. Attorney for New Jersey; a Federal prosecutor in New York City; and a law clerk to Supreme Court Justice William Brennan. He's been confirmed by the Senate three times.

In all of his roles, Mike has shown a deep commitment to the cause of justice and an unwavering determination to protect the American people. Mike has also been a key leader in the war on terror. On September the 11th, 2001, he was managing the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, an 800-person operation devoted to enforcing our Nation's criminal laws. In the days after September the 11th, Mike helped trace

the terrorist attacks to the Al Qaida network. He understood immediately that the strategy on the war on terror is to prevent attacks before they occur. His energy and intellect put him at the center of many vital homeland security improvements, especially increased information sharing within the FBI and with State and local officials.

He's faced countless challenging decisions and has helped to protect his fellow Americans while protecting their civil liberties. I'm grateful that the judge has agreed to bring his exceptional judgment and integrity to an urgent new responsibility. I'm confident that he will be a strong, effective leader for the Department of Homeland Security.

Two years ago, we created this new Department to ensure a comprehensive, unified effort to protect the American people against new dangers. Since that time, the employees of the Department have carried out the largest reorganization of the Government in a half a century. Under the direction of Secretary Tom Ridge, the Department of Homeland Security has improved airline security, enhanced the protection of our borders and ports of entry, and taken vital steps to safeguard the Nation's critical infrastructure. Tom Ridge has the gratitude of our entire Nation. I thank him for his leadership. I appreciate his hard work.

The Department of Homeland Security will also continue working to reduce the Nation's vulnerabilities to weapons of mass destruction and cyberterrorism. We are engaged in a daily mission to prepare effective responses to any future attack and to closely coordinate homeland security efforts with State and local officials. Our Nation is still at war. We're focused. We're taking decisive actions on the homefront that are critical to winning this war.

When Mike is confirmed by the Senate, the Department of Homeland Security will be led by a practical organizer, a skilled manager, and a brilliant thinker. As head of the Criminal Division and as a U.S. Attorney in New Jersey, Mike built an impressive record of cutting through redtape and moving organizations into action. He's worked cooperatively with the Federal and State and local law enforcement officials. He will always be a friend to America's first-responders.